

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT
FLAGSTAFF REGIONAL PLAN 2030 AMENDMENT**

**PUBLIC HEARING
PZ-15-00136-01**

**DATE:
MEETING DATE:
REPORT BY:**

**February 12, 2016
February 24, 2016
Tiffany Antol, AICP**

REQUEST:

A minor *Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030* amendment request from the City of Flagstaff Sustainability Program, on behalf of the property owner, City of Flagstaff, to change the area type designation on Map 21 and 22 from Area in White and State Land to Existing Parks/Open Space for approximately 2253.20 acres located on Observatory Mesa.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning and Zoning Commission forward the minor *Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030* amendment to the City Council with a recommendation for approval.

PRESENT LAND USE:

Undeveloped land in the Area in White area type category.

PROPOSED LAND USE:

Park/Open Space area type, which would support the use of the property as open space with passive recreation.

NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT:

North: Single-family residences; Agricultural Residential, 2.5 acre minimum (AR-2.5) zone and Residential Single Family, 5 acre minimum (RS-5) zone (County)
East: Single-family residences; Rural Residential (RR) zone and Estate Residential (ER) zone (City)
South: Railroad Springs Subdivision; Manufactured Home (MH) zone (City)
Single-family residences; General, 10-acre minimum (G) zone (County)
West: Coconino County National Forest lands; Open Space and Conservation (OS) zone (County)

The subject property is checker boarded with Coconino National Forest lands.

REQUIRED FINDINGS:

The Planning and Zoning Commission shall find that the proposed *Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030* (the “Plan”) amendment meets the requirements of the General Plan and Subdivision Code (City Code Title 11).

In considering the request for an amendment to the Plan, the goals and policies should be considered to ensure that the requested change to the Future Growth Illustration is in conformance with the overall vision. “The Flagstaff Regional Plan establishes the vision for the future growth and development of Flagstaff and its surrounding area through goals and policies” (p. III-4). “General plans are not static documents; they recognize growth as a dynamic process, which may require revisions to the plan as circumstances or changes warrant” (p. III-1).

STAFF REVIEW:

Introduction/Background Discussion

This request is the second of three related items on the Commission’s agenda; the first item is an annexation request for 640.51 acres, the third request is a Zoning Map Amendment request for 2253.20 acres.

The City of Flagstaff Sustainability Program, (the “Applicant”) on behalf of the property owner, The City of Flagstaff, is requesting a minor *Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030* (FRP 2030) amendment to ensure conformance with a proposed Zoning Map Amendment to Public Open Space (POS) zoning. The Zoning Map Amendment includes a total of 2253.20 acres. The proposed amendment to the FRP 2030 will affect approximately 2253.20 acres of land depicted on the Future Growth Illustration (Maps 21 and 22).

A Regional Plan Amendment is required for expanding or changing the boundaries of one area type to another area type. The table describing the “Proposed Regional Plan Amendment Processes” is silent on how to process a plan amendment for some area types including Area in White. The Comprehensive Planning Manager has made an interpretation that if the change being requested for an area type is not shown on the table on page III-9, then the amendment will be considered a minor amendment unless it falls into the defined major amendment category.

The subject property is known as Observatory Mesa and was purchased by the City of Flagstaff from the Arizona State Land Department in November 2013 with funding from the 2004 voter approved Open Space bond. The property was purchased for the express purpose of preserving its unique recreational, educational, and natural resources.

Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030 Amendment Request

As discussed in the “How This Plan Works” chapter (page III-4), the *Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030* is used in the regulatory decision-making process by the Planning & Zoning Commission, City Council and City staff. The Commission and the Council are responsible for making development decisions such as zoning map amendments or specific plan amendments, which depends on whether the proposed changes or projects are consistent with the Plan’s goals and policies. The Future Growth Illustration on Maps 21 and 22 (same map; one is regional scale and one city scale) and the text of the Plan will provide supplemental information for the interpretation of goals and policies. In case of any conflict between the Future Growth Illustration and the Plan’s goals and policies, the goals and policies will prevail.

The Future Growth Illustration has two types of land use designations: “Area Types” describe the placemaking context of Urban, Suburban, Rural, or Employment and “Place Types” such as activity centers, corridors and neighborhoods provide the framework for the density, intensities, and mix of uses within the area types. This application proposes to change the area type of “Areas in white retain their existing entitlements” but not the place type for this project. “Areas in white retain their existing entitlements” is used to describe areas that have not been assigned an area type. In most cases, these parcels are public lands held by the Forest Service or City. The Comprehensive Planning Manager has made the interpretation that the surrounding area types on Maps 21 and 22 should be taken into account for consistency. In cases where a parcel is adjacent to more than one area type, either could be extended to the property. With this request the existing “Area in White” will, if approved, be assigned the Parks/Open Space area type.

Attached are exhibits comparing the existing Future Growth Illustration map to the proposed Future Growth Illustration map. These maps and any applicable text of the FRP 2030 should be considered in the context of the Plan’s goals and policies. A discussion of the FRP 2030 goals and policies including Environmental Planning & Conservation, Open Space, and Recreation, is provided below.

APPLICABLE GENERAL PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES

Staff has identified the following Regional Plan Goals and Policies that could be applied to support the proposed minor Regional Plan Amendment. The list of goals and policies are followed by an analysis.

Environmental Planning & Conservation

Goal E&C.6. Protect, restore and improve ecosystem health and maintain native plant and animal community diversity across all land ownerships in the Flagstaff region.

Policy E&C.6.3. Promote protection, conservation, an ecological restoration of the region’s diverse ecosystem types and associated animals.

Goal E&C.7. Give special consideration to environmentally sensitive lands in the development design and review process.

Policy E&C.7.1. Design development proposals and other land management activities to minimize the alteration of natural landforms and maximize conservation of distinctive natural features.

Policy E&C.7.2. Favor the use of available mechanisms at the City and County level for the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands, including but not limited to public acquisition, conservation easements, transfer of development rights, or clustered development with open space designations.

Goal E&C.10. Protect indigenous wildlife populations, localized and larger scale wildlife habitats, ecosystem processes, and wildlife movement areas throughout the planning area.

The purchase of Observatory Mesa for open space and passive recreational uses not only conforms with the goals and policies of this section but helps to attain the goals set out by the community to protect natural areas for the benefit of native plant and animals as well as provide for active land management strategies that ensures on-going maintenance.

Open Space

Goal OS.1. The region has a system of open lands, such as undeveloped natural areas, wildlife corridors and habitat areas, trails, access to public lands, and greenways to support the natural environment that sustains our quality of life, cultural heritage, and ecosystem health.

Policy OS.1.2. While observing private property rights, preserve natural resources and priority open lands, under the general guidance of the Flagstaff Area Open Space and Greenways Plan and the Natural Environment maps.

Policy OS.1.3. Use open spaces as natural environment buffer zones to protect scenic views and cultural resources, separate disparate uses, and separate private development from public lands, scenic byways, and wildlife habitats.

Policy OS.1.4. Use open space as opportunities for non-motorized connectivity, to interact with nature, and to enjoy the view s and quiet.

The preservation of Observatory Mesa adds to the overall parks and recreation system within the City of Flagstaff through the provision of passive recreational opportunities. Observatory Mesa is easily accessible to many within the City of Flagstaff and provides a buffer between developed areas and larger natural areas.

Community Character

Goal CC.1. Reflect and respect the region's natural setting and dramatic views in the built environment.

Policy CC.1.1. Preserve the natural character of the region through planning and design to maintain views of significant landmarks, sloping landforms, rock outcroppings, water courses, floodplains, and meadows, and conserve stand of ponderosa pine.

Observatory Mesa is a significant landform that frames the northwestern edge of the city and the preservation of this resource will help to maintain the natural characteristics that define Flagstaff.

Recreation

Goal REC.1. Maintain and grow the region's healthy system of convenient and accessible parks, recreation facilities, and trails.

Policy Rec.1.1. Integrate active and passive recreational site within walking distance throughout the region to promote a healthy community for all City and County residents and visitors.

Policy Analysis

This list below identifies several key points and community benefits supporting (+) the proposed amendment:

- + The Preservation of Observatory Mesa adds to the city's recreation system by providing ample passive recreational opportunities.

- + Observatory Mesa is a significant landform that will help to preserve the natural characteristics that define Flagstaff;
- + The protection of Observatory Mesa benefits the native plant and animal community with active on-going management

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICE IMPACT ANALYSIS: No system impact analysis is required with this application. However, the Annexation, Regional Plan, and Zoning Map Amendments will increase recreational opportunities within the city.

Public Input

Public hearings before the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council are conducted in conjunction with the Annexation, Regional Plan, and Zoning Map Amendment requests. In accordance with Arizona Revised Statute and Section 10-20.30.080 (p. 20.30-9) of the Zoning Code, notice of the public hearings were provided by placing an ad in the Daily Sun, posting notices on the property, and mailing a notice to all property owners within 600 feet of the property (exceeding the 300-foot requirement).

All property owners within 600-feet of this site were notified via mail of the zoning map amendment, annexation, and regional plan amendment and asked to attend the Open Space Commission meeting on October 22, 2015. Four individuals spoke in regards to the open spaces case but none directly in relation to Observatory Mesa. Minutes for this meeting are attached.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff believes that the proposed amendment to the Regional Plan is supportable under the guidelines of the *Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030*, and would recommend approval of the proposed amendment.

Attachments:

- Future Growth Illustration – Proposed